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Triplicad el salario mínimo 12
Ejecuciones en Arizona 12
Intolerancia tras hoja de higo 12

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Turmoil no excuse for invasion

U.S. hands off Haiti!

By G. Dunkel

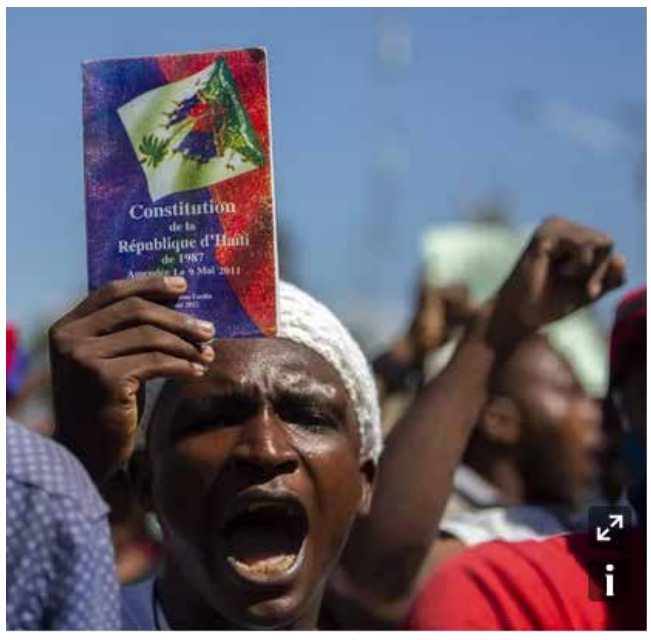
In Haiti, around 1:00 a.m., July 7, brand new SUVs without license plates pulled up to the private residence of President Jovenel Moïse in Pétion-Ville. A team of assassins got out, slipped through his security and shot him dead. His spouse, Martine Moïse, was severely injured.

President Joe Biden has expressed reluctance to openly intervene in the chaos that puppets and allies of the U.S. have created in Haiti. Nevertheless, U.S. imperialism's responsibility for the deadly, contentious situation following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse is clear.

The real details of the assassination — who did it, who paid for it, what were their motives — are murky. The Haitian National Police (PNH) have charged 20 Colombian citizens and two U.S. citizens of Haitian origin with participating in the attack.

Some Colombians were arrested inside the Taiwanese Embassy where they had taken refuge; others were arrested at the hospital where they had taken Moïse's daughter and spouse.

No reports say whether any of Moïse's security guards, who were drawn from elite units of the PNH, were injured in the attack. The PNH postponed interviewing their leading officials until some time during the week of July 11, at least four days after the attack. The PNH announced July 11 that some guards involved had been placed under house arrest.



Protest in La Croix, Haiti, in March. More on the centuries-long history of Haitian resistance on 6-7.

Claude Joseph, whom Moïse appointed prime minister in April, now claims he gives orders to the 15,000 cops and the 500 army troops of the country. Dr. Ariel Henry was scheduled to replace Joseph on the day of the assassination. Because the president, Moïse, had been killed, Henry was unable to be sworn in.

Both Joseph and Henry claim to be acting president. The U.S. government and the United Nations, whose special representative in Haiti is Helen La Lime, have recognized Joseph as Haiti's president. Before she was appointed to the U.N., La Lime was U.S. ambassador to Angola.

Why should the U.S. decide?

The question that patriotic Haitians have to ask is: Who gave the U.S. and the U.N. the authority to determine Haiti's president? Whatever is decided, both Claude Joseph and Ariel Henry have strong connections to the United States.

When he was a student leader in Haiti, Joseph received substantial funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, which is a tool of U.S. intervention. Later, Joseph got his doctorate from the New School and taught in New York and Connecticut. One of the first steps Joseph took as acting president was to request U.S. soldiers be sent to Haiti.

Henry served as minister of interior and territorial communities and was politically active organizing around the second coup d'état against elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004. U.S.-based mercenaries carried out that coup, kidnapping and taking Aristide to

Continued on page 7

WORKERS WORLD *editorial*

Let Cuba live!

More Cuba coverage on 2, 5.

July 12 — Today the capitalist media have turned their focus on anti-government demonstrators in Cuba, which the New York Times claimed to number in the "thousands," in a country of 11 million people.

How many thousands, if there were really that many, isn't stated (nor were there any videos of such-sized crowds), but in any case this represents a small percentage of the population who reportedly blame the Cuban socialist state for shortages of food and vaccines. By comparison, 28 million people in the U.S. are estimated to have taken part in the Black Lives Matter upsurge following the lynching of George Floyd.

Nevertheless, the number protesting in Cuba is treated as something "astonishing for a country that limits dissent." (New York Times, July 12)

Yet on July 12, The Independent reports a measured response on the part of Cuban police: "Police began detaining people about 2 ½ hours into the protest in Havana after some started pulling up cobblestones off the streets and throwing them at police." About 20 were taken

Continued on page 10

Atlanta homeless union 3
Philly for Palestine 3
Hanuani-Kay Trask, ¡presente! 3
Origin of HIV/AIDS 4
Disability rights: wages, access 9
Editorial: Covid & capitalism 10

8–9
Unequal justice
Pennsylvania and Palestine: Hunger strikers win
Liberation, not transfers
Abolish the death penalty!

Workers Assembly Against Racism

Over 75 people came out July 10 to a meeting of the Workers Assembly Against Racism (WAAR) in Washington Square Park, New York City, to talk about issues that affect workers throughout the world. On microphone is Chris Smalls, fired Amazon worker, organizer with the Congress of Essential Workers and Amazon Labor Union.

— Report and photo by G. Dunkel

Energy grab in Puerto Rico 11
Who killed Berta Cáceres? 11

U.N. vote and car caravan for Cuba

By Bill Sacks
New York City

Of the 39 countries on which the U.S. imposes deadly economic and financial sanctions, the longest and most onerous sanctions have been imposed on Cuba through a 60-year blockade.

And while Cuba, in defiance of the blockade, has survived and even thrived by establishing a countrywide free health care and educational system, the blockade has caused severe shortages in food, fuel and medical supplies on the island.

In the face of these economic difficulties, Cuba has been an example of international solidarity by sending medical brigades to scores of countries in response to natural disasters and other health crises. The Henry Reeves Brigades have provided medical care and assistance to numerous countries during the current coronavirus pandemic.

At the same time Cuban scientists have developed several successful anti-COVID-19 vaccines. Cuba, Vietnam and Iran, in collaboration, plan to produce over 100 million doses of vaccines for their populations, as well as for other countries that have received very small amounts or none of the vaccines.

Nearly every country in the world has recognized Cuba's contributions to the international community. This was confirmed June 23 by an overwhelming 184-2 vote in the United Nations General Assembly in support of a resolution to end the U.S. blockade. Only the U.S. and its creation, the settler state of Israel, voted against the resolution.

Workers World Party, through its organizing and its outreach literature, has supported all efforts to end the criminal blockade, from the beginning. On June 20, WWP members joined the monthly New York City car caravan and street rally in support of the Cuban people. The caravans, which began in Miami during the height of the pandemic when it was unsafe to gather in person, have become a monthly event throughout the world.

Cars — decorated with signs calling for the end to the blockade and for the U.S. to get its military prison out of Guantánamo Bay — drove around Harlem and other neighborhoods, receiving cheers from people in the community. The caravan culminated in a street rally, joined by activists without cars.

A large caravan will take place July 25 in Washington, D.C. The event is timed to greet and join Carlos Lazo, a Cuban American school teacher, and six other Cuban Americans who are walking 1,300 miles from Miami to Washington. There they will present the Biden Administration with a petition signed by over 25,000 people calling for an end to the U.S. blockade and demanding the end of all sanctions against revolutionary Cuba.

Despite Cuba's success in producing five vaccines that have been proven effective against the virus, the inoculation of its population has been seriously affected by the blockade. While enough doses have been produced to vaccinate the entire population of Cuba, the blockade has prevented medical supplies crucial to that effort, such as syringes, from reaching Cuba.

In response, Workers World has joined with the Cuba Solidarity movement in a campaign to purchase and deliver 20 million syringes to Cuba. So far, over $450,000 has been raised, and the first shipment of 1.5 million syringes is due to arrive in Cuba July 12.

Contributions to the Syringes for Cuba Campaign can be made on Global Health Partners' website: *ghpartners.org*. ☐

New York City, June 23 WW PHOTO: S. HEDGECOKE

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD this week

◆ In the U.S.

Workers Assembly Against Racism 1
Homeless Union forms in Atlanta 3
Philadelphia march for Palestine 3
Haunani-Kay Trask, Hawaiian leader 3
Unequal justice in Philadelphia 8
Liberation, yes! Transfers, no! 8
SCI Phoenix: Hunger strikers win 8
Abolish the death penalty 9
Disabled people demand access, fair wages 9

◆ Around the world

No excuse for invasion: U.S. hands off Haiti! 1
U.N. vote and caravan for Cuba 2
The origins of HIV/AIDS 4
Cuba and HIV/AIDS: Combating an epidemic . . . 5
Haiti revolution shook empires 6
1915: U.S. invades, occupies Haiti 7
Hunger strike: Palestinian activist released 8
Honduras: Murderer of Berta Cáceres--guilty . . . 11
Stop privatizing Puerto Rico! 11

◆ Editorial

Let Cuba live! End the blockade! 1
COVID-19 and capitalism 10

◆ Noticias en Español

No trabaje (por un salario bajo), no comerá. 12
Arizona ejecuciones y gas utilizado por nazis. . . . 12
Intolerancia tras hoja de higo de la religión 12

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. ☐

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact: 212.627.2994

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Homeless union forms in Atlanta

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

On the evening of July 4, the federal holiday known as Independence Day, an encampment of 15 or more tents was set up on the tree-shaded lawn of City Hall.

This was the first public act of the newly formed ATL Homeless Union. A press release widely circulated on social media expressed the frustration and pain of the thousands of people who have been forced to live on the streets of the "city too busy to hate."

At City Hall, Atlanta, July 4. WW PHOTO: DIANNE MATHIOWETZ

The statement demanded the end of superficial "band aid" measures by successive city administrations that have failed to provide safe housing for all those in need.

Initiated by Diesel, a disabled homeless man, the four main demands of the Union resonated with unsheltered people, several who happened upon the tents that night while searching for a safe place to lie down. A banner stretched across a barricade on the City Hall property read "ATL Homeless Union Demands: Housing, Health care, Water/Sanitation and a Seat at the Table."

On July 5, with City Hall closed for the holiday, Atlanta City police gave a series of announcements declaring everyone would be arrested if they didn't leave the area.

A support group kept serving food and water to encampment members, as more and more homeless people were drawn to the scene.

The number of police kept growing until there were at least 50-60 Atlanta police and Fulton County sheriffs with multiple cars and prisoner vans. All at once, police grabbed and dragged people who were in one of the tents to the awaiting vehicles. Six people were charged with trespass on public property.

The Union then reassembled its encampment on the grounds of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, a block from City Hall.

The struggle continues! ☐

Philadelphia march against Israeli apartheid

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Hundreds of people carrying Palestinian flags, protest signs and banners gathered at City Hall for a March Against Israeli Apartheid July 10.

A spirited march up the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to the Art Museum followed, with speakers on a sound truck leading chants the entire route. One popular chant was "We don't want your 'two states,' we want all of '48" in reference to Palestinian territory designated as the "state of Israel" in 1948.

The event was organized by Philly for Palestine and co-sponsored by Philadelphia chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace, Students for Justice in Palestine, Council on American-Islamic Relations and IfNotNow along with the Philadelphia Free Palestine Coalition, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and Workers World Party. Sponsors also included Temple University and Swarthmore College SJP and JVP-Swarthmore.

Rally speakers included Dr. Anthony Monteiro, Rabbi Linda Holtzman, Palestinian-American poet Samya Abu-Orf, Ted Kelly for WWP, Pastor Nicolas O'Rouke with Working Families Party, Ahmet Tekelioglu from CAIR, Nada Abuasi from the University of Delaware SJP and Deandra Price for Black Alliance for Peace.

A collective of bicycle riders provided security for the event. ☐

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Haunani-Kay Trask, Hawaiian leader

Hawaiian leader Haunani-Kay Trask died July 3. She is best known for her 1993 collection of essays, "From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii." In her 1996 essay, "Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism," Dr. Trask said that she understood "how capitalism and racism sustained each other, how the world of hatred the haole had made in the United States originated in the colonial period when the Native American tribes suffered an onslaught of genocide under the 'freedom-loving' presidents Washington, Jefferson and the rest." The following excerpted statement was made through the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, which she founded.

Haunani-Kay Trask PHOTO: KAPULANI LANDGRAF

It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask's passing. Dr. Trask was a visionary leader of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. She inspired critical thinking and made important contributions in areas of settler colonialism and Indigenous self-determination. More importantly, she was a bold, fearless and vocal leader that our Lāhui needed in a critical time when Hawaiian political consciousness needed to be nurtured.

Professor Trask was a fearless advocate for the Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) and inspired our people everywhere to embrace their ancestry and identity as Hawaiians and to fight for the restoration of our nation. She gave everything she had as a person to our Lāhui; and her voice, her writing and her unrelenting passion for justice will, like our Queen, always represent our people.

Our center mourns her passing and sends our aloha and to the Trask ʻohana. E ola mau loa e Haunani-Kay Trask, ʻaumakua of the poet warrior. ☐

Celebrate the Cuban Revolution with Workers World!

Workers World/Mundo Obrero joins with the Cuban people in celebrating the 68th anniversary of an event which changed the course of history for their island nation. On July 26, 1953, Cuban revolutionaries boldly attacked the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba and simultaneously conducted a siege of the army barracks in Bayamo.

These courageous acts were aimed to strike a blow against the brutal U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Although the military goals were not achieved, and the struggle suffered a temporary setback, the armed struggle had reached a new stage that continued until the dictatorship was overthrown on Jan. 1, 1959. As the guerrilla forces fought in the mountains, an underground movement spread across the country.

Cuban medical team arrives to deliver aid and solidarity to South Africa during the pandemic.

Cuba has not only developed in every sphere since the socialist revolution, this island nation has carried out acts of international solidarity to aid oppressed countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, whether with military might or medical personnel and supplies. This assistance has been given generously, despite the horrific blockade implemented against Cuba by Washington for six decades.

Even now during the pandemic, despite having a dearth of medical supplies for inoculations, Cuba plans to share COVID vaccines with countries denied them by the imperialist West.

Cuba has deservedly won the support and respect of peoples around the globe. Workers World has shown our unwavering solidarity with this socialist country on this newspaper's pages and in countless activities on the streets.

Your donations count!

We know you read WW/MO for class truth, free from corporate lies and geared to working and oppressed people. **We need your help!** Join the WW Supporter Program, initiated 44 years ago, to aid in funding the newspaper. Since the early 1990s, these donations have also helped maintain the workers.org website.

New articles are posted daily at workers.org. During the pandemic, the weekly newspaper has been printed and mailed out once a month; and WW weekly editions continue to be posted in PDFs on our website. We plan to print more frequently when it becomes safer, as the pandemic is resolved.

For an annual donation of $75, $100 or $300, members receive a year's subscription, letters with news of activities and analyses of timely issues, and one, two or three free subscriptions, respectively, for friends. Members can receive our book, "What road to socialism?" (Notify us.) Or read it free at workers.org/books.

Write monthly or annual checks to Workers World. Mail them, with your name and address, to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org.

We're grateful for your help in building Workers World! ☐

A Marxist history of HIV/AIDS **Part 2**

The origins of HIV/AIDS

By Devin Cole

HIV refers to human immunodeficiency virus. If left untreated, HIV can lead to the disease AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

The reactionary, conservative response to AIDS post-1981 was to immediately blame and further condemn gays and lesbians, and later all LGBTQ+ people.

HIV was initially referred to as "GRID" — Gay-Related Immune Deficiency. Although quickly changed, that smear on the LGBTQ+ community left a lasting mark. Today LGBTQ+ people are still having to prove that AIDS is not a "gay disease."

Though evidence was overwhelming that HIV/AIDS is not specifically related to sexual identity, the reactionary right would not hear of it. This included many in the U.S. government. It was only in 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, that the Federal Drug Administration "relaxed" its restriction on gay men donating blood. Now they are allowed to give blood, if they have refrained from sex for three months prior. This prejudicial ban, rooted in sheer ignorance and discrimination, lasted over 30 years. (bit.ly/2SM5WCe)

But HIV/AIDS did not originate in the LGBTQ+ community in 1981. Before 1981, AIDS had been affecting colonized and nationally oppressed people for over 60 years. Scientists have presented concrete evidence that HIV originated around 1920 in Léopoldville (later Kinshasa), Belgian Congo, due to mutation and adaptation of a virus found in chimpanzees. Known as Simian Immunodeficiency Virus, it was transferred to humans through human hunting and consumption of those animals. (bit.ly/2UFdHKI)

In 1998, at the 5th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, scientists revealed that the first-known case of HIV in a human was found in a plasma sample from a man who lived in Léopoldville in 1959. (bit.ly/2UJFutv)

Belgian colonialism breeds diseases

From 1885 until it won independence in 1960, the present Democratic Republic of Congo was a colony under Belgium monarchs and then its state. The peoples appropriated along with their land suffered almost unimaginable horrors, especially under King Leopold II. At the 1885 "Scramble for Africa" Berlin Conference, European leaders granted Leopold his own private colony. His "Congo Free State" was run as a private enterprise with the labor of African peoples held captive and coerced by torture and mass murder. It is thought that as many as 10 million people may have died there from murder, famine and disease under this colonial rule.

Taken over by the Belgian state in 1908, the Congo, its people and its resources of rubber, ivory and minerals continued to be brutally exploited under burgeoning capitalism. The Belgian Congo's new infrastructure relied heavily on railroads. From 1920 to 1932, over 1,500 miles of railroads were built in the country, all on the backs of Congolese people and migrant labor. Léopoldville, the capital of the Congo, was a central point of the Belgian-controlled railroad, with many white Belgian men moving to the city to capitalize on its industry.

Alongside the railroad industry, the Belgian colonizers expropriated wealth in the various other forms. In a 1960 article in this newspaper, Workers World Party founder Vince Copeland expanded on the role of the white Belgian colonizers:

"Who were the white people who were in the Congo? You can bet they were not copper mine workers, sweating half-naked as they dug up the fabulous copper wealth to be exported out of Africa. And you can bet they were not diamond miners, nor cobalt, nor uranium miners. They weren't porters, janitors, mill workers, plantation workers or harbor workers, either.

"As a matter of fact, the white people that were in the Congo were not working people at all. They were the overseers for the real slave masters back home in Belgium.

"They were the middle-class representatives of upper-class capitalism. They were the higher-paid clerks, the engineers, the petty bosses, the merchants and technicians — most of them armed with pistols and whips — some of them weighted with a guilty conscience." (bit.ly/3wqcmEW)

World AIDS Day in El Fasher, Sudan, Dec. 1, 2014. PHOTO: HAMID ABDULSALAM

As these industries grew, lining the pockets of the Belgian bourgeoisie while draining everything the Congolese workers had, another industry flourished: sex work. White Belgians, mostly men, traveling to the Congo, settled largely in Léopoldville, where the sex-work industry was centralized. Due to the lack of proper health care, medicine and hygiene, diseases in this area were very common. Under these circumstances, the earliest form of HIV developed through mutation and transferral from the Simian Immunodeficiency Virus.

The virus could have been contained at this point, but due to the rapid expansion of imperialist plundering of the Congo, relying on the railroad industry, the white Belgian colonizers traveled around and left the country, unknowingly infected. This resulted in a rapid transmission across countries and even continents, although the exact dates of when the virus began to spread worldwide are currently unknown.

As these industries grew, lining the pockets of the Belgian bourgeoisie while draining everything the Congolese workers had, another industry flourished: sex work. White Belgians, mostly men, traveling to the Congo, settled largely in Léopoldville, where the sex-work industry was centralized.

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By 1975, doctors at the Mamo Yemo Hospital in Léopoldville reported a doubling of cases of Kaposi's sarcoma; and retroactive tests performed later indicate that by 1980, 3% of pregnant people in Léopoldville had HIV/AIDS. ("The coming plague: newly emerging diseases in a world out of balance," Laurie Garrett, 1994)

Epidemic in Burundi

To the east of the Congo lies Burundi. Formerly part of colonized German East Africa, the area that later became Burundi was handed over to Belgium in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which carved up German and Italian holdings in Africa among European nations who were victorious in World War I. Belgium occupied this land as it had the Belgian Congo. This colonialist occupation lasted from 1918 to 1962, when Burundi declared independence. But the damage from decades of colonialist and imperialist plundering had taken its toll.

The Belgian occupation of the Congo and Burundi opened up a high amount of HIV/AIDS transmission as the colonization of the two countries led to depleted health and medical resources for the residents of both countries.

After the HIV/AIDS epidemic became known worldwide, a retrospective study was done on 658 blood specimens in a study on hemorrhagic fever in Burundi. It was concluded that HIV/AIDS had not only spread to Burundi by 1981, but that the country was experiencing a HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1980 — one year before the CDC or any bourgeois media reported on HIV/AIDS. In the capital city of Bujumbura, the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS by 1980 was 7.6%. (bit.ly/3yxXjKL)

HIV/AIDS in the U.S. prior to 1981

In 1969, Robert Rayford, a Black teenager in St. Louis, Mo., died of what doctors then deemed a "mysterious illness," although they associated it with Kaposi's sarcoma, which was later associated with HIV/AIDS. Samples of Rayford's tissue were collected after his death and frozen for almost 20 years. In 1987, the samples were analyzed and tested positive for HIV/AIDS, retroactively making Rayford the first person in the U.S. known to die of AIDS. (bit.ly/3k0aNLr) Over a span of four decades, AIDS had spread worldwide — with not one person knowing what it was or just how deadly it had become.

Additionally, there are countless stories of people, largely in LGBTQ+ communities, who contracted or even died of HIV/AIDS in the 1970s. These stories are not well-documented, because of prejudice and the resulting lack of information surrounding the disease. Many who survived this plague and look back on it, however, often conclude that a friend, family member or lover who died sometime between the 1970s and 1981 from what was then a "mysterious illness," actually died of AIDS.

Reparations for Africa now!

The peoples of Africa deserve colossal reparations due to the centuries-long plundering — by Europe, the U.S. and NATO-backed capitalist forces — of African lands, resources and the labor and very lives of its peoples. It is imperative that full reparations be paid for these colonial, neocolonial and imperialist crimes against humanity — including for the medical crises and plagues, like HIV/AIDS, that arose under this exploitation. These disgusting crimes — committed by capitalism and imperialism — must be put to death by socialism.

Part 3 will focus on the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the refusal of the Reagan administration to acknowledge it and early movement resistance to the plague.

Devin Cole is a transgender Marxist organizer and writer. They are the president of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), a transgender advocacy organization in northwest Florida, and a member of the Workers World Party — Central Gulf Coast (Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi) branch.

Lavender & Red

Leslie Feinberg's 116-part series on socialism and LGBTQ+ history, "Lavender & Red," appeared in the *Workers World/ Mundo Obrero* newspaper in 2004-2008.

Available as a FREE download at *workers.org/books*.

Cuba and HIV/AIDS

How to combat an epidemic

By Æzra EL
Boston

This is an edited version of a talk given July 9 at a Workers World Party–Boston meeting on the theme "Cops and Colonizers Out of Pride."

Pride 2021, when we celebrated the 52nd anniversary of the righteous Stonewall Rebellion, also rang with inspiring calls from the world over to lift the imperialist blockade of socialist Cuba. How are these struggles connected?

In the U.S., we have recently seen wave-after-wave of anti-trans legislation, which continues under President Joe Biden, who many eagerly voted for, duped by claims he was the candidate of the marginalized. Trans women are being shouted out of dressing rooms, bombarded with death threats and murdered at alarming rates. All the while corporations merely change their advertisements for 30 days in June each year, trot out their employees for corporatized Pride parades, capitalize on the fight-back legacy of the LGBTQ+ community and then about-face to contribute large sums to antigay politicians.

But throughout the U.S., there have been signs of grassroots, worker-led reclamations of Pride. Here in Boston, LGBTQ2S+ radicals led by Black Trans women have, for the second year in a row, organized the aptly named Trans Resistance march. Spitting in the eye of corporatized Pride, this action called for a return to the revolutionary spirit of Stonewall. Thousands gathered at Trans Resistance to celebrate and call for the end of Pride-for-profit, its history of capitulation to capitalist profiteers and its disgusting collaboration with local cops.

This Pride month also saw another moment decades in the making. The countries of the United Nations, for the 29th year running, overwhelmingly approved a resolution that called for lifting the imperialist U.S. blockade of revolutionary Cuba. The blockade was put in place in 1962. This year, and typically, only two governments, the U.S. and Israel, voted against Cuba.

Cuba's scientific socialism

After a revolutionary army led by Fidel Castro freed Cuba from the fascistic Batista regime in 1959 and threw capitalist interests off the island, Cuba has been a growing and glowing beacon of human rights. Free health care, the elimination of homelessness, a nearly perfect literacy rate and a robust history of internationalism — from medical support to military aid — have all spoken to the continuing success of Cuba's revolutionary project. Under imperialist threat from its beginning, Cuba has shown the promises of scientific socialism.

Despite expected difficulties during the beginnings of the Revolution, Cuba has worked tirelessly to confront anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry — a legacy of the colonial past — and to politically enshrine the human rights of LGBTQ+ people to the point of ensuring free access to gender-affirming care.

A brilliant measure of this commitment was the Cuban response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In 1983 in the U.S., 3,422 deaths had already taken place due to AIDS. But it would be two years and 9,887 deaths before U.S. President Ronald Reagan would even utter the term "AIDS," despite the rising death toll. (factlv.org/timeline.htm)

1983: Cuba tackles HIV/AIDS

In 1983 — two years before the first diagnosis of HIV on the island — the Cuban government was already working to ensure the safety of all its people. And Cuba tackled HIV/AIDS from a principled scientific stance. The Cuban health ministry took part in a Pan American Health Organization workshop on HIV/AIDS; then in short order, they set up a national commission with the sole purpose of researching and preventing a massive outbreak of HIV in Cuba.

Within the year, Cuba had destroyed 20,000 vials of potentially contaminated blood, established diagnostic procedures, coordinated weekly updates from hospitals and tested 135,000 Cubans for HIV. (workers.org/books, Leslie Feinberg, Lavender and Red #98: "Cuba mobilized before first diagnosis")

In the U.S., medical authorities, government officials and the bourgeois press inflicted antigay and racist stigma on those falling ill. Haiti and the entire continent of Africa were blamed for the disease, while simultaneously HIV/AIDS was labeled a "gay disease" handed down from God to punish those viewed as immoral by bigoted religious forces. The criminalization of drug use and sex work — and homosexuality itself — in the U.S. drove seropositive individuals further into the neglected fringes of society — in stark contrast to Cuba.

As the revolutionary work developed in Cuba, the island underwent great improvements in the area of sexual health. Safe access to abortion as well as methods of contraception were the norm. Cuba's public health agencies promoted a very open, matter-of-fact approach to discussing sex. Due to its system of universal health care, Cuba had the advantage in responding to what is most often a sexually transmitted disease.

One step by Cuba in preventing an epidemic of HIV/AIDS came under the most criticism — however inaccurate and rooted in anti-communism that might be. This was the creation of "sanatoria," essentially small communities exclusively for the seropositive, focused around the health and well-being of those with HIV/AIDS.

Care in Cuba's sanatoria

A charge of "quarantine" has been leveled against the Cuban sanatoria, and it must be emphasized that this word does not describe the sanatoria by a long shot. That charge equates Cuba's approach to the outright homophobic calls in the U.S. to quarantine gay men. These were disgustingly exemplified in Baptist minister and politician Mike Huckabee's homophobic rantings: "I feel homosexuality is an aberrant, unnatural and sinful lifestyle, and we now know it can pose a dangerous public health risk," and "If the federal government is truly serious about doing something with the AIDS virus, we need to take steps that would isolate the carriers of this plague. ..." (tinyurl.com/4h6zuy5t)

Quarantine, as proposed under capitalism, would have been part of a system that left those with HIV/AIDS dead or barely surviving, left them jobless, homeless and without treatment. The reactionaries wanted to wash their hands of the disability and devastation their policies cause, forget about People With HIV/AIDS and condemn them to death — out of sheer hatred.

A dramatic example was the racist detention of Haitian refugees at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, in a prison on land occupied by the U.S. military. There HIV-infected "refugees lived in deplorable conditions, were subjected to violence and repression by the U.S. military, deprived of proper medical care and left without any legal recourse of rights." (Karma R. Chavez, "ACT UP, Haitian Migrants, and Alternative Memories of HIV/AIDS," Quarterly Journal of Speech 98; Feb. 1, 2012)

Revolutionary Cuba had a strikingly different approach. In the sanatoria, those living with HIV/AIDS received housing, food, facilities for sport and exercise, entertainment and medical, psychological and social services — all at no cost. Further, they were given their full weekly wages by the government. (workers.org/books, Leslie Feinberg, Lavender and Red #99: "AIDS 'Quarantine' in Cuba: Care and prevention, not repression")

Cleo Manago, a same-gender-loving Black man traveled to Cuba with a 200-person delegation in August 1994 and visited the sanitoria himself: "They had 24-hour health care, the option of having family members, even a dog or a cat stay with them. Same-gender-loving and heterosexual couples living together at the complex is a common occurrence.

"I asked people living there about the conditions in which they live. None were happy about having HIV or AIDS, but all were very appreciative of the care they received. Many who could go home, if they wanted to, chose to stay where they were guaranteed prepared food, a comfortable home and prompt medical attention," Manago reported. "This particular center offered ambulatory care for those with jobs or who wanted to continue with school. To my knowledge there is nothing similar in the U.S.A." ("Cuba from a Black, Male, Same-Gender-Loving Perspective," Sonoma County Free Press, August 1994)

Fast forward 30 years: The Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports Cuba has one of the lowest HIV rates in the world.

ACT UP fights AIDS catastrophe in the U.S.

In the U.S. measures to stop the HIV/AIDS epidemic have been won on the backs and bodies of the activists in ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). Formed in 1987 in New York City, ACT UP focused on getting treatment into the hands of those living with HIV/AIDS. By the time of its founding, over 16,000 people had died from AIDS-related complications in the U.S. (factlv.org/timeline.htm)

AZT, the first drug to treat HIV/AIDS, was made available in 1987; AZT is an antiretroviral originally studied for use on cancer. Given its extremely expensive price, only those with good insurance were able to get what was considered a lifesaving treatment at the time.

ACT UP was dedicated to civil disobedience, direct action and a cell-structure organizing system. In a little over two years, ACT UP was victorious in getting the price of AZT lowered, but the organization's activism did not stop there. In recent years here in Boston, ACT UP has been raising hell in order to prevent cuts in funding for programs essential to slowing the spread of HIV and in assisting the seropositive.

Be like Cuba!

Cuts to HIV/AIDS funding are happening frequently in the U.S. Together with the prolific levels of racism, transphobia and drug-use stigma in this country, the rise in new infections is occurring in the most marginalized communities. Communities at highest risk for seroconversion in the U.S. are Black and Latinx gay men and trans women, and people who inject drugs.

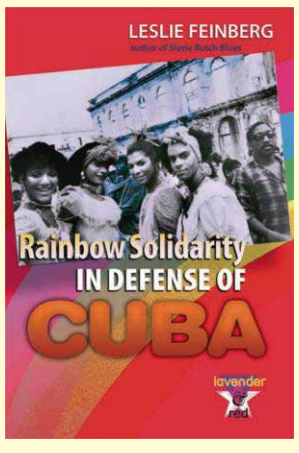
A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study in 2016 estimated that one of every two Black gay men would become seropositive in their lifetimes. (tinyurl.com/y253tkcb) A 2020 CDC report on Black trans women in major U.S. cities found 62% had HIV. (tinyurl.com/46h8e6nb)

Racism and queerphobia play a distinct role in health care disparities. When you factor in homelessness and drug-use stigma, it becomes difficult to see any light at the end of the tunnel in the U.S. Even more damning, COVID has added to the ever expanding evidence of the failure of this country's health care "system."

The U.S. government cannot combat a pandemic — especially not in a way that prioritizes the safety of the most marginalized.

It is abundantly clear that to overcome these and all injustices created by the primacy of profit over people, we must become like Cuba. We must be fearless, resolute and revolutionary — and to coin a phrase I have heard tossed around here once or twice — We must build a workers' world!

The writer is a trans lesbian, a stone butch, a revolutionary communist and an organizer with ACT UP.



Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba
by Leslie Feinberg

"Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba" is a compilation of 25 articles about same-sex love and sex/gender variance in Cuba's pre- and post-revolutionary history. These articles make up parts 86 to 110 of the Lavender & Red series, which has run as a feature in Workers World weekly newspaper since the first article appeared in the June 3, 2004, issue.

Available as a FREE download at *workers.org/books*.

Haitian Revolution shook empires

By Makasi Motema

This slightly reedited article was originally published in Workers World/ Mundo Obrero, Feb. 7, 2019.

"Battle of Vertières," a 21st-century painting by Ulrick Jean-Pierre, commemorates the victory on Nov. 18, 1803, of Haitian forces made up mainly of formerly enslaved people, led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Napoleon's French expeditionary army.

In a Vodou ceremony led by Dutty Boukman in 1791, several hundred enslaved people swore to fight to the death against a brutal system of slavery and torture. The revolt that followed would shake the greatest empires of Europe and burn the slave society of Saint-Domingue to the ground. From the ashes emerged the first Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere and the first nation founded by a successful slave rebellion: Haiti.

In the 18th century, Saint-Domingue — the western French-owned half of the island of Hispañola — was the most lucrative colony in the Caribbean. Its primary export was sugar, which was extremely valuable. By 1780, Saint-Domingue was producing 40% of the sugar consumed in Europe.

The incredible profits were the product of incredible human suffering. Harvesting sugar cane was labor intensive, and enslaved people were imported to the island in greater and greater numbers as sugar profits rose. By 1787, the colony was importing 40,000 enslaved people per year. More than 60% of enslaved people on the island were African-born.

Enslaved people were worked to death and tortured brutally if they resisted. Mortality rates were high — 50% of enslaved people died within a year of arriving in Saint-Domingue. But the business was so lucrative, planters simply opted to import more enslaved people rather than improve treatment.

In any slave society, sexual assault is rampant; as a result, many mixed-race children were produced. In Saint-Domingue, the French referred to them as "Coloreds." What made Saint-Domingue different from other slave societies was that slave owners openly entered relationships with, and even married, their Black and Colored enslaved people. The Colored offspring would then go on to inherit their father's property — including the plantations and the enslaved people. This created a new socio-racial class that was oppressed by strict de jure racial discrimination, but, at the same time, possessed vast amounts of wealth.

Adding to these divisions were the contradictions between wealthy whites and poor whites, or "grands blancs" and "petit blancs." The grands blancs owned the plantations, but they spent very little time in Saint-Domingue. Some had never been to the island at all. They hired petit blancs, whites from the lower classes who were desperate to escape their debts, to manage the plantations. For petit blancs, the goal was to earn enough money to buy their own plantations and perhaps leave Saint-Domingue.

French Revolution inspires revolts

With the social stratification of Saint-Domingue, the French Revolution in 1789 hit the island like a meteor. The grands blancs saw the revolution as their chance to extricate themselves from the hated "Exclusive," the system of trade laws that prevented Saint-Domingue from trading with any other nation besides France. The petit blancs, on the other hand, wanted to renegotiate the entire social contract.

The petit blancs attempted to form their own councils and began marching across the island, extolling the virtues of liberté (liberty) and égalité (equality). They were quick to use mob violence against all who stood in opposition.

Meanwhile, enslaved Blacks observed the revolutionary ferment and planned to secure their own liberty. Historian Carolyn Fick argues that enslaved people held secret meetings every week throughout the summer of 1791.

The Haitian Revolution would never have been possible without the information network that connected Blacks throughout the island. Enslaved people who worked in the ports overheard the news from sailors and merchants. Through Black overseers and coachmen — who held the trust of their masters and were therefore given significant freedom of movement — this information was passed along to the enslaved people on the plantations in the interior.

Escaped enslaved people, living in settlements known as "maroon colonies," also communicated with Blacks on the plantations and provided safe places for meetings. One unique feature of slavery in Saint-Domingue was that temporary escape, "petit marronage," for a night or even a few days was quite common and sometimes went unpunished. Through these short-term excursions, Blacks were able to meet and coordinate their actions in the remote mountain regions of the island.

It was during these meetings that rumors spread of new laws passed in France. The possibility that reforms in treatment were coming, perhaps the banning of the whip and all other forms of torture, filled the enslaved people with hope and courage. But if such reforms had been made, there was no evidence that the white masters planned to implement them. Drastic measures had to be taken, and the plot for insurrection was born.

On Aug. 14, 1791, Black conspirators slipped back into their plantations in the night, killed their masters and torched the instruments of their enslavement. Sugarcane fields are highly flammable; and in just a few days, most of the North Province of Saint-Domingue was set ablaze. All the machinery on the sugar plantations was destroyed; the means of production were not merely seized but annihilated, so that the planter system could never return.

White citizens, who had retreated to the large port city of Cap-Français, looked out on a landscape of smoke and ash. In the midst of their own struggle for liberty, the whites of Saint-Domingue had done little to prepare for the possibility of a slave insurrection, even though a few captured Blacks had confessed to the plot several weeks prior. Blinded by white supremacy, the colonists could not imagine that "their" enslaved people would fight as fiercely and as bravely as any Europeans to free themselves from oppression.

Angry and confused white colonists descended into rioting and lynched any Blacks they could find in the city. But the insurrection could not be stopped. France effectively lost control of Saint-Domingue in those first few months and never regained it.

What followed were several years of both guerrilla and conventional warfare. Several leaders emerged from this struggle, the most famous being Toussaint Louverture. Louverture had been born into slavery under a lenient master. He learned to read and studied European classics. He was likely tutored in the ways of West African warfare by his father, reported to have been an African chief. By the time the revolution broke out, Louverture had been free for many years and worked as a supervisor on his former master's plantation. Louverture joined the growing insurgency, and his education and ability resulted in his rapid appointment as a rebel commander.

As the French Revolution sent shockwaves throughout Europe, the surrounding monarchies declared war on France one by one. Britain invaded Saint-Domingue from the west, hoping to snatch the most valuable colony in the Caribbean while France was embroiled in chaos. Spain, already holding the eastern half of the island (Santo Domingo) and, seeing an easy opportunity to undermine the revolution in France, began supplying the Black insurgents with weapons and supplies. This encouraged many rebels, including Louverture, to join the Spanish and resist the French during 1792 and 1793.

Slavery abolished

But in 1794, France officially abolished slavery in all its territories. Knowing that no other imperialist power would take such a radical step, Louverture and his rebel forces allied with France to resist the monarchist powers. Like a hammer and anvil, Louverture in the north and the Colored General [Benoit Joseph] André Rigaud in the south led Black, Colored and white soldiers against the British in the center of the colony, forcing them off the island.

The brilliant leadership of the Black insurgency, which had first taken Saint-Domingue from France, had now won the island back for France. This made Louverture a valuable asset for the colonial government. The white members of the French Civil Commission, who nominally governed Saint-Domingue from Cap-Français, relied on Louverture to enforce their decrees and maintain order in the colony. The Black people had won their freedom, and most were content to live as subjects of France, so long as France respected that freedom.

But the plantation owners, who had been made refugees by the insurrection, continued to plead their cause in France. As the forces of counterrevolution took hold in Europe, the exiled colonists gained more sway. When Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1797, the proponents of slavery finally found a sympathetic ear.

During the period of 1795-1800, contradictions mounted in Saint-Domingue. Although the Black population was free, the French Civil Commissioners were eager to restore the profits from sugar exports. They mandated that Blacks remain on the plantations to work as paid laborers. The Black masses resented this serfdom, but there was little they could do. Meanwhile, the Black leadership sought to appease the French. There was only one nation in Europe which would tolerate free Blacks in such a wealthy colony, so Black generals, Louverture included, enforced the labor laws demanded by France.

There was also a division of race and class between the Blacks and the Coloreds. The Coloreds believed that their wealth and education made them better suited to governing and resented seeing formerly enslaved Black people in positions of power. These contradictions culminated in the "War of Knives" in 1799. Instigated by the reactionary French Commissioner [Gabriel] Hédouville, the most prominent Colored leader Rigaud rebelled against Louverture's mostly Black forces.

Rigaud's southern army was outnumbered, but he counted on aid from the British. That aid never came. It was not long before Louverture's most dangerous lieutenant, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, moved south and crushed Rigaud.

'Haiti' is born

Louverture consolidated his power, becoming master of Saint-Domingue. He devoted himself to rebuilding the plantation economy and creating a society without racial discrimination. He enshrined racial equality in a new constitution and declared himself governor for life.

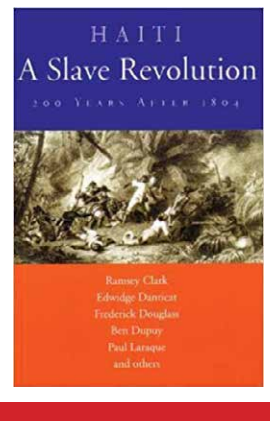
But in France, Napoleon Bonaparte saw

Continued on page 7

Haiti: A Slave Revolution
200 years after 1804

Published in 2004, "Haiti: A Slave Revolution," uses art, poetry, photos and essays to document the victory of an enslaved people liberating themselves, and their centuries of continued resistance to embargoes, occupation, dictatorship, U.S. intervention and global capital.

Available as a FREE download at *tinyurl.com/IACbooks*



1915: U.S. invades and occupies Haiti

By G. Dunkel

This slightly edited article was originally published in Workers World/ Mundo Obrero, August 3, 2015.

The United States began its military occupation of Haiti over a century ago, sending an armed force ashore on July 28, 1915, just south of Port-au-Prince. Somewhat earlier, a raiding party of U.S. Marines stole Haiti's gold reserve of about $500,000 and turned it over to First National City Bank in New York — now Citibank.

Haitians — on the island and in its diaspora — have been fighting for over 200 years to resist forces of colonizing enslavement, imperialist racism and capitalist exploitation.

Historical background to the occupation

Haiti was the second country in the Western Hemisphere to gain its independence. After a hard-fought, 12-year-long struggle against France ended in 1804, slavery was eradicated and the slave owners expelled from the country.

The U.S. had sent its first foreign aid ever — $750,000 worth of food and arms — to the slave owners in Haiti to put down the revolt. At that time, $750,000 was big money. The U.S. Constitution enshrined slavery, and U.S. leaders held up Greece and Rome, whose economies and societies depended on slavery, as models for the state they were building.

In the 19th century, U.S. owners of enslaved people were extremely worried that Haiti's example might be contagious. And 10,000 white owners and families fled from Haiti to the U.S. where enslavement was still legal; mainstream coverage of the revolution was extensive.

The U.S. didn't recognize Haiti as an independent country for 60 years, actively working to keep Haiti diplomatically and economically isolated.

Haiti's "original sin," in the opinion of many Haitian historians and activists, was becoming the only country to have had a successful slave revolution.

Opposition in both Haiti and U.S.

Justifications for the 1915 U.S. occupation, which lasted until 1934, were filled with lies and outright falsehoods. President Woodrow Wilson openly declared its purpose was to "establish peace and good order" and "has nothing to do with any diplomatic negotiations." But his orders to the admiral running the military operation involved changing Haitian law to protect U.S. and other foreign interests.

The U.S. invoked the Monroe Doctrine [the foreign policy that the Western Hemisphere "belonged" to the U.S.], to justify its violation of Haitian sovereignty and forced the Haitian Parliament to agree to a 10-year treaty that made Haiti a U.S. political and financial protectorate.

The U.S. didn't recognize Haiti as an independent country for 60 years, actively working to keep Haiti diplomatically and economically isolated. Haiti's "original sin," in the opinion of many Haitian historians and activists, was becoming the only country to have had a successful slave revolution.

The occupying Marine forces came from the U.S. South, where anti-Haitian sentiment and racism were at high levels. The Marines forced Haitian peasants, the vast majority of the population at that time, into work gangs to build roads, bridges and dams.

Their treatment was so rotten that it provided the impetus for a revolt of the cacos, armed peasant guerrillas, under the leadership of Charlemagne Péralte and Benoît Battraville. This revolt lasted, even after the execution of Péralte and Battraville, until 1921. After the end of the armed resistance, popular opposition, sparked by nationalist students and by the formation of the Haitian Communist Party under Jacques Roumain, intensified until the U.S. finally withdrew its troops in 1934.

The first opposition to the U.S. invasion came from the Black community in the U.S. and was part of the NAACP's international work. According to Mary Renda's book "Taking Haiti," the U.S. Communist Party, mainly working through allied groups, played a prominent part in organizing this opposition. The occupation of Haiti and of the Dominican Republic were issues in the U.S. presidential campaigns of the 1920s.

Continuing U.S. control in Haiti

The withdrawal of the U.S. Marines didn't really end U.S. control over Haiti. The National Guard, which became the Haitian army, was formed and trained by the Pentagon. It supported the reign of the oppressive Presidents Duvalier, father and son [François and Jean-Claude, respectively], from 1957 to 1986. It then sponsored, maneuvered and supported various military regimes until the elections that brought Jean-Bertrand Aristide into the presidency in 1991. [Aristide, a proponent of liberation theology, was Haiti's first democratically elected president.] The U.S. supported and helped organize two coups that finally forced him from office in 2004, through kidnapping and exile.

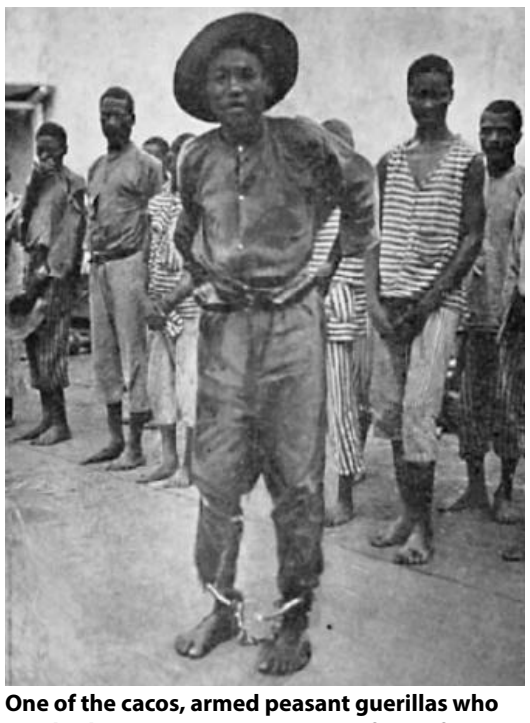
From 2004 [to 2017], a United Nations military force called Minustah occupied Haiti, functioning as a veil for U.S. troops, which could be quickly sent in if Washington felt it necessary. For example, 25,000 U.S. troops arrived a few days after the earthquake of 2010 wiped out the U.N. command.

Beyond exercising military and political rule over Haiti, U.S. rulers want to humiliate it, pretending it can't run its own affairs without outside assistance, and discount and deprecate its culture.

The Haitian progressive movement has organized protests of 100,000 people or more in Port-au-Prince and nationwide, even though most Haitians live without reliable electricity or telephone service. They can certainly organize themselves.

Long live a free and independent Haiti!

For more information, see the book "Haiti: A Slave Revolution," available as a PDF at tinyurl.com/IACbooks.



One of the cacos, armed peasant guerillas who revolted against U.S. occupation of Haiti from 1915 through 1921.

Haitian people have been taking to the streets by the millions in protests and general strikes against labor exploitation and U.S. interference in their government. Here, Port-au-Prince in 2019.

Turmoil no excuse for invasion

U.S. hands off Haiti!

Continued from page 1

the Central African Republic.

On paper, Haiti is a parliamentary democracy. Right now, it has no functioning parliament. Its government has been hollowed out, leaving 10 senators the only elected office holders for this country of 11 million people.

This hollowing was done deliberately by Moïse, with full and unequivocal U.S. backing, so he could run the country by decree. During the past year, hundreds of thousands of ordinary Haitians have been in the streets protesting Moïse's attempt to use U.S. support to stay in power.

The question that patriotic Haitians have is: Who gave the U.S. and the U.N. the authority to determine Haiti's president?

In a July 6 statement, Black Alliance for Peace put a price tag on this support: The U.S. "has spent at least $12.6 million since Moïse was elected in support of dubious elections and bogus political processes."

Without a parliament to grant its approval, all the prime ministers whom Moïse appointed were unconstitutional. Much of what they did may be challenged legally.

All the other officials in Haiti — members of the National Assembly (the lower house of parliament), mayors, councillors, boards of all sorts — had their mandates expire by February of 2021 or earlier. President Moïse postponed the elections that would have renewed their mandates and instead appointed his choices to be mayors and local officials.

On July 9, eight of the ten serving Haitian senators met and elected yet another provisional president, the chair of the Senate, Joseph Lambert.

Black Alliance for Peace has pointed out that "[t]he Haitian people must be allowed to exercise self-determination and address their internal political situation without interference."

Since what the U.S. and France have done has caused tremendous economic and financial hardship to Haiti, the ongoing Haitian demand for full and fair reparations is certainly justified. ☐

Haitian Revolution shook empires

Continued from page 6

Saint-Domingue as the launching point for a new North American empire. He craved the seemingly boundless profits that only a slave economy could produce. And he resented the Black general who presumed to rule Saint-Domingue and issue proclamations and constitutions without his approval. In 1801, Napoleon sent his brother-in-law, Général Charles Leclerc, and 40,000 French soldiers to oust Louverture and restore white rule.

The result was a war where disease, a veteran Black army and ceaseless guerrilla warfare would devastate the French forces, leaving only about 8,000 survivors to return to France. Louverture would not live to see the end of the war; he would be captured by Leclerc and die in a French prison in 1803. It was left to Dessalines and the masses of armed free Blacks to beat back the French and establish an independent Haiti on Jan. 1, 1804.

In choosing the name "Haiti," the name given the island by its original Taino inhabitants, Dessalines repudiated not just slavery, but 300 years of colonialism.

Today, as we see Haiti struggle under the oppression of neocolonial forces, we should remember that this small island nation was founded as a symbol of resistance and liberation. It is exactly that symbol that imperialists have always sought, yet failed, to destroy. ☐

Unequal justice in Philadelphia

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

As protests over the police murder of George Floyd engulfed the U.S. in spring 2020, in Philadelphia two polar-opposite demonstrations took place.

On the afternoon of June 1, thousands of demonstrators protesting police brutality spilled onto the I-676 highway in Center City. Police responded to these peaceful protesters with a barrage of rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray directed at individuals' faces, while they freely used their police batons. Several people were injured, and hundreds were arrested with many still facing charges.

Later that day, in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood, a group of white vigilantes, armed with baseball bats, walking clubs and tools, threatened, harassed and assaulted peaceful counter-protesters. They claimed to be "protecting their neighborhood" from nonexistent looters and rioters.

Over 36 residents called police to report the threats and attacks of this white mob. Yet police who showed up did nothing to intervene. When members of the vigilante group attacked and injured two people — a protester and a reporter — police stood by, watching the assaults, and made no arrests. Over 20 officers were in the area, with several seen chatting with the vigilantes.

Workers World spoke with Fishtown resident Scott Williams who described the white-supremacist vigilantes: "People in the neighborhood, especially people of color, were terrorized, and as a result many moved out. They saw white guys with baseball bats, roaming around the neighborhood looking to beat up people of color and people associated with the Black Lives Matter movement.

"But our neighborhood did respond," Williams explained. "Over the next two nights, thousands of people marched through the neighborhood in massive, spontaneous, pro-BLM demonstrations. Local small business and property owners were [the people] who were defending the police. It wasn't poor white racists; it was rich white guys including some gentrifiers, and they were exposed."

PHOTO: K. PAYNTER

Marching in response to white vigilantes, Fishtown residents raised fists in solidarity with protests against the death of George Floyd, June 3, 2020.

With little fanfare, weeks after the assault, one of the vigilantes, George Graf, 36, was charged with conspiracy, aggravated assault and reckless endangerment for punching and kicking (PBS) WHYY producer Jon Ehrens who was videoing the scene. Graf was charged with felony criminal conspiracy to engage in aggravated assault. Graf had pleaded guilty to simple assault twice before; one case involved anti-Asian violence.

Why did it take weeks for Graf to be held to account for his violent attacks?

Unanswered questions

At the same June 1, 2020, racist march, Richie Goodwin repeatedly punched Black Lives Matter supporter Matt Williams near the police station, while police stood by.

Williams and his partner Kara Khan were biking home after being tear-gassed by police during the I-676 protest. As they neared the area where the white vigilantes were gathered, someone threw a water bottle at Williams' head and yelled obscenities and racial slurs at him and Khan. Goodwin then shoved Williams off his bike and repeatedly punched him in the head until his ear and face bled.

Finally, on July 7, 2021, Goodwin — brother of a 26th District Philadelphia police officer — was arrested for the attack on Williams and charged with assault and recklessly endangering another person.

There are many unanswered questions about this incident. Goodwin has a history of violence. He has previously served prison time for fatally punching a man during a bar brawl in 2008 but was out on probation by 2012.

Why did it take over a year for Goodwin to be charged for beating Williams and only after he turned himself in?

Why was Goodwin out on probation in less than four years on a murder conviction — when some Pennsylvania incarcerated people are serving decades in prison on much less serious charges? Demetrius Grant, a Black man incarcerated in SCI Albion, and a regular contributor to Workers World's Tear Down the Walls pages, is serving his 28th year for simple assault.

Unequal justice

Many Black Lives Matter protesters were arrested during the demonstrations in 2020. Several, including BLM activist Anthony Smith, have since been charged with federal felonies that carry heavy possible sentences for allegedly setting police cars on fire. If convicted, the mandatory minimum sentence for this property damage is seven years.

But again this year, late on the evening of July 3, Philadelphia police stood by, doing nothing to intervene, when a group of 200 white-supremacist men, marching through Center City, attacked and brutalized people who challenged their right to threaten and endanger the people of this city. ☐

¡Liberación Sí! ¡Traslados No!

Liberation Yes! Transfers No!

After years of protests, York Prison, near Philadelphia, will no longer be housing ICE detainees after Aug. 12. But instead of releasing those incarcerated, prison authorities are sending them to other states, far away from their families and their legal service providers. Members and supporters of Movement of Immigrant Leaders in Pennsylvania (MILPA), JUNTOS, New Sanctuary Movement, American Asian United and Viet Lead protested July 9 at Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices in Philadelphia. Protesters demanded the detained people be released — not transferred — so they can continue with their cases outside of detention, alongside their loved ones.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

After 64-day hunger strike

Palestinian activist released

By Ted Kelly

Ghandafar Abu Atwan, a 28-year-old Palestinian man, has finally been released after a 64-day hunger strike. He was protesting his arbitrary imprisonment by Israeli occupation forces. Held in an Israeli prison since October 2020, Abu Atwan was placed under "administrative detention," a tactic condemned by international human rights groups by which the Israelis kidnap and incarcerate Palestinians without charge or trial — indefinitely.

On May 5, six months after his arrest, Israeli authorities extended Abu Atwan's "administrative detention" period for another six months. No reason was given. That is when Abu Atwan launched his hunger strike.

The successful protest by which Abu Atwan won his release comes only months after Palestinian prisoner Maher al-Akhras staged a 103-day hunger strike and won his freedom from the same conditions.

Free all political prisoners! Free Palestine! ☐

SCI Phoenix: Hunger strikers in solitary win demands

By Joe Piette
Philadelphia

Prisoners in solitary confinement who went on a hunger strike June 23 in the State Correctional Institution at Phoenix — Pennsylvania's largest prison — ended their difficult struggle July 6 with a stunning victory.

According to Levittown Now, more than 20 incarcerated people were demanding the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) "acknowledge that they are being held in a currently undefined 'intensive management unit' (IMU) and provide a policy and guidelines in the department handbook for it; provide people being held in this unit with programming and mental health services; give incarcerated people a path out of solitary confinement; and end long-term solitary confinement in the state." (July 2)

Some of the strikers have been held in solitary for decades. Several were transferred to Pennsylvania following an uprising at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Delaware in 2017. They have been held in solitary since being transferred from Delaware, where solitary confinement for long periods of time is not allowed.

At SCI Phoenix, July 6. WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Solidarity, not solitary

On July 6, supporters organized by the Human Rights Coalition held a protest outside SCI Phoenix. "They're in a cell the size of your bathroom, and there's no rules, no regulations in place for this IMU program," said Patricia Vickers of HRC. "No rules to say how often you can get out, no rules to say how many phone calls you get, no rules to say how often you get a shower." (whyy.org, PBS, July 6)

According to the Abolitionist Law Center, organizers celebrated three immediate wins: The day of the protest, PA DOC Secretary John Wetzel announced he was signing an agreement that everyone misconduct-free for a year will transition off the "Restricted Release List," an indefinite solitary confinement program. Several hunger strikers were then transitioned from RRL. An IMU Handbook has been written and will be issued soon. (tinyurl.com/y5dr6cws, twitter, July 7)

A state bill, HB1037, which would prohibit the use of solitary confinement for certain groups like pregnant women as well as people younger than 21 years old or older than 70, was introduced in the Pennsylvania state legislature in March. The proposed law would also restrict the length of solitary confinement for all people to no more than 15 days, as recommended by the United Nations. (tinyurl.com/ptfm6u34)

Prolonged solitary confinement is a form of torture that has long-lasting, detrimental effects on mental health. It is cruel, inhuman, degrading and racist.

The successful hunger strikers at SCI Phoenix are an example of how solidarity can win in the global struggle to end solitary confinement once and for all! ☐

No ‘middle ground’

Abolish the death penalty!

By Mirinda Crissman and Ted Kelly

President Joe Biden is under intense pressure from activists around the country to abolish the federal death penalty after a state-sanctioned bloodbath marked the end of his predecessor’s first and only term. President Donald Trump went on a killing spree and had 13 people legally lynched in the last six months of his presidency between July 2020 and January 2021. Prior to those executions, there had not been a federal execution since 2003.

“The pace of [Trump’s] federal executions has no historical precedent,” said Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, in a press release Nov. 30, 2020. “The last time more than one person was executed during a transition period takes us back to Grover Cleveland’s first presidency in the end of the 1880s.”

Among the executions Trump carried out was that of Lisa Montgomery — the only woman on death row — and Navajo Nation citizen Lezmond Mitchell, despite formal protests by the Navajo Nation and even the prosecutor who had convicted Mitchell.

Trump’s federal killing spree did not happen until term’s end because of difficulty in procuring the necessary lethal injection drugs. According to Reuters, it took three years to establish a supply chain to assemble the poisonous cocktail for the lethal federal injections. (tinyurl.com/hw5xhbnb)

It has been difficult for the U.S. government to procure drugs for executions in the 21st century, largely due to opposition from European activists. Michael Tarm reported on these events for the AP on June 18: “[p]harmaceutical companies in the 2000s began banning the use of their products for executions, saying they were meant to save lives, not take them. …

“Some states have refurbished electric chairs as standbys for when lethal drugs are unavailable. On June 16, South Carolina halted two executions until the state could pull together firing squads. To the disbelief of many, Arizona went so far as to acquire materials to make cyanide hydrogen — the poisonous gas deployed by Nazis to kill 865,000 Jews at Auschwitz — for possible use in the state’s death chamber.” (tinyurl.com/292fy2tj)

Biden is the warden of “Imprisoned Nation”

President Biden is not just silent or “dragging his feet” on his campaign promise to end the federal death penalty. The Biden administration has already insisted to the Supreme Court that the federal death penalty be reinstated for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 20 years old when arrested for his role in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. (tinyurl.com/u42ywcbs)

Biden is offering no more than a suspension that can be ended when the next president takes power. A moratorium or suspension of federal executions does not mean anyone’s life has been or will be spared.

Even if Biden doesn’t order a single execution, he leaves the death penalty as an option in the future, effectively handing his successor a loaded gun. Even to argue for its use as a consequence for “the worst of the worst” crimes still means the U.S. capitalist state — not the people of the U.S. — is deciding what constitutes “the worst.”

Just weeks after Biden’s January inauguration, Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.) criticized the Democrat for his apparent betrayal of earlier promises to abolish the death penalty.

“State-sanctioned murder is not justice, no matter how heinous the crime. President Biden has repeatedly expressed his opposition to the death penalty and has the historic opportunity to finally bring an end to this inhumane, racist and flawed practice,” Pressley said at a Feb. 4 press conference. “I am deeply disappointed that the Department of Justice would move in conflict with the President’s stated policy position and abandon promises made to voters.” (tinyurl.com/rnmxhcz8)

Prior to his campaign promise to abolish the racist death penalty, Biden helped write the infamous 1994 crime bill that added 60 federal crimes for which a person could be put to death. (Workers World, Jan. 18)

Political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who spent 30 years on Pennsylvania death row, calls the U.S. prison population the “imprisoned nation.” As president, Joe Biden is its Warden-in-Chief.

PHOTO: THE TEXAS DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION MOVEMENT

Protesters march on the Texas State Capitol building at the annual March to Abolish the Death Penalty in 2011.

The state’s racist death penalty

Throughout U.S. history, the death penalty has disproportionately targeted Black people and other people of color, poor people, those suffering from trauma and people who are intellectually disabled.

In 2021, 49 people are on federal death row, compared to thousands on state death rows. In the U.S. 1,062 out of the 2,553 people on death row are Black, about 41% — while Black people make up less than 14% of the country’s population. The same racist disparity is clear on federal death row, where 39% of those sentenced to die — 18 people — are Black.

The death penalty mutated from the rope to the chair to the needle, developed on Indigenous genocide and enslavement of African people on stolen land. The death penalty persists, despite it being no deterrent to crime and despite the legal system condemning innocent people so often. A government guilty of such crimes against humanity does not have the moral authority to kill anyone.

In 2009, a landmark study concluded that 88% of the nation’s leading criminologists do not believe the death penalty is an effective deterrent to crime. That June, Amnesty International wrote: “Scientists agree, by an overwhelming majority, that the death penalty has no deterrent effect. … States without the death penalty continue to have significantly lower murder rates than those that retain capital punishment.”

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, 23 states have no death penalty, 3 states have governor-imposed moratoriums and 24 states still have the death penalty.

Support for abolition grows

Public support for the death penalty has now reached the point where the majority of people in the U.S. oppose its use. (deathpenaltyinfo.org)

Support for the death penalty and its actual use has dramatically declined over the last decade in a number of states. The places where it persists are in the U.S. South, largely in states where Black Reconstruction efforts were beaten back murderously by racist counterrevolutionaries.

In total state murders, Texas leads with 572 executions, followed by Virginia, Oklahoma, Florida, Missouri, Georgia and Alabama with 113, 112, 99, 90, 76 and 67 executions, respectively.

Virginia made history this year as the first former Confederate state to abolish the racist practice via their state legislature. This is a huge step forward.

But no one state can rescue every prisoner from a state-sanctioned murder. Only the U.S. president has the power to commute every death sentence with a single stroke of a pen.

Abolish the life sentence and the death penalty!

The abolition of the death penalty is one necessary step in dismantling the entire prison industrial complex. But it must be remembered that many thousands of lives are cruelly taken on “slow death row.” Over 200,000 people are currently in prison after being sentenced to life without parole — in other words, they are sentenced to die by way of prison conditions. At least 2,715 people have died since March 2020 after contracting COVID-19. (tinyurl.com/6hpbr395)

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party demands that the Biden administration take immediate action to abolish not just federal executions, but to abolish the death penalty nationwide. There is no acceptable “middle ground” position to take on a matter of life or death. ❐

2nd Sunday Dialogue

Disabled people demand access, fair wages

By Edward Yudelovich

SUPPORT DISABLED LIBERATION !
UNITY
From each according to our abilities,
to each according to our needs
Disability Justice and Rights Caucus of Workers World Party
djrcwwp@workers.org 212-627-2994 – 147 W. 24 St 2nd Floor NY, NY 10011

The Disability Justice and Rights Caucus of Workers World Party holds a Second Sunday Dialogue by zoom every month. On July 11, at the sixth of these dynamic sessions, DJRC speakers discussed important struggles to get access and fair wages for disabled people.

DJRC activist Renée Imperato related how New York City’s outdoor dining expansion during the COVID-19 pandemic invoked many social contradictions. The reckless rush to open up the economy, in hope of saving the collapsing restaurant industry, tore to pieces sidewalk- and street-accessibility rights guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The expanded sidewalk outdoor-dining structures built by private enterprise use public space rent free — taking up sidewalks maintained by the taxes workers pay — while the outdoor dining can close off street access and severely limit mobility. Imperato reported watching meetings where the NYC City Planning Commission celebrated “how wonderful street life is now,” oblivious to the struggles with mobility of people with disabilities.

Coupled with the sidewalk issues, delivery bicycles — some with motorized pedal assists — power scooters and small motorcycles have injured and even killed disabled folks and seniors in the city. Lisa Banes, a 65-year-old actor, died this way on a Manhattan street in June.

The caucus decided to submit a protest statement to the NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities and to picket some businesses whose outdoor dining structures obstruct safe access for both disabled and able-bodied pedestrians.

Disabled workers demand wage equity and benefits

The caucus will be checking on the progress of legal battles led by the National Federation of the Blind to win minimum wage equity for disabled people. Loopholes in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act allow businesses to pay people with disabilities less than the hourly minimum wage.

Second Sunday participants recalled an effective 2014 lunchtime protest by Workers World Party members and friends at a Goodwill store in Long Island City, Queens, near the conference hall where the WWP National Conference was being held. Goodwill is notorious for paying disabled workers less than the minimum wage. One DJRC activist recounted experiences from co-workers of their mother. Another caucus member identified Goodwill’s horrible record of sexual harassment and racist management conduct, workplace safety violations and deaths.

Finally, Princess Harmony reported the closing of the only U.S. city-funded recreation center for people with disabilities — the Carousel House in West Fairmount Park in Philadelphia.

Next up for the caucus is a July 29 webinar supporting the rights of incarcerated workers with disabilities and highlighting why the ADA has not been enough for any of us, no matter what our disabilities may be. For more information, the caucus can be reached at djrcwwp@workers.org.

Yudelovich is a DJRC caucus activist with neurodivergent and auditory disabilities.

WORKERS WORLD editorials

Let Cuba live!

Continued from page 1

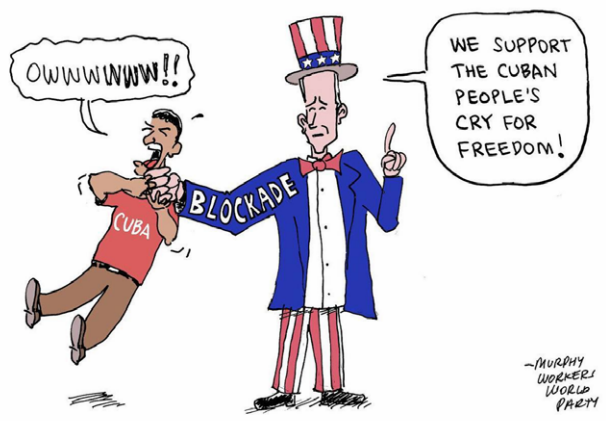
away in police cars and other vehicles.

The U.S. is rarely excoriated by the media for "limiting dissent," despite numerous arrests, assaults and even killings of protesters by police last summer, and despite 34 state legislatures considering bills that drastically curtail the First Amendment right to protest.

The anti-Cuba bias is manifested in another way: the media's failure to address the root cause of the shortages of necessities faced by the Cuban people. It is the six-decade-old U.S. blockade, tightened multiple times by the Torricelli Act, the Helms-Burton Act, and more recent moves by the Trump administration that President Joe Biden shows no signs of ameliorating. This web of restrictions under the blockade regime prevents countries from trading with Cuba if they seek trade relations with the U.S.

U.S. economic war on Cuba

As Cuba stated to the United Nations before a June 23 vote on ending the blockade: "In the last four years, the Government of the United States has added more than 240 coercive measures against the Cuban people and its Government which remain in effect. These measures are not mere actions to tighten the embargo, but new methods, some of them unprecedented, that have escalated the economic war against Cuba to extreme levels, as seen in the shortages that are part of daily life for every



Cuban." (misiones.minrex.gob.cu)

Only the U.S. and the apartheid state of Israel opposed the resolution, which for the 29th time left the U.S. isolated on this question, with 184 countries voting to end the blockade.

A prime example is an issue reportedly driving the protests: lack of access to COVID vaccination. Under the blockade regime, U.S. pharmaceutical companies cannot sell vaccines to Cuba, but Cuba has developed its own vaccines against COVID-19. Both Abdala, and Soberana 02 in tandem with Soberana Plus, show an efficacy rate of over 90%. The vaccine research has not generated one dollar in profits; all of it was conducted for public good under Cuba's socialized health care system.

Yet Cuba needs syringes to administer the vaccine! And, due to the U.S. blockade, the country cannot buy them from its neighbor 90 miles away. Cuba solidarity activists in Canada and the U.S. have launched a campaign to raise funds to make up for a shortfall of 20 million syringes. (ghpartners.org)

This is but one example of the innumerable hardships imposed by the blockade that affect every aspect of life, from food production to medical care to combating climate change. Difficulties have been compounded by the pandemic, which in Cuba like everywhere, has made it unsafe to perform many necessary jobs.

The U.S. blockade is essentially an act of war aimed at destroying Cuba as a beacon of socialist construction and revolutionary internationalism.

Cuba has charged the U.S. with instigating the protests, and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez called on the people to come into the streets. "We know that there are revolutionary masses confronting anti-revolutionary groups. We will not accept that any mercenaries and sellouts of the U.S. empire will provoke destabilization in our people," said Díaz-Canel Bermúdez.

Late on the night of July 11, multiple videos were posted on twitter by Cubans of thousands of revolutionaries taking the streets in Havana and around the island, chanting "I am Fidel."

Break the blockade! Long live the Cuban Revolution! ☐

COVID-19 and capitalism

Is the COVID-19 virus on the way out? Is the U.S. government taking appropriate steps to eliminate this disease?

To even begin to answer these questions, the first fact to understand about the COVID-19 pandemic is that pandemics affect everyone in the world. All parts of today's world are interconnected by the globalized economic supply chain. Only by eliminating the virus worldwide, as was done with smallpox 44 years ago, will everyone be safe from the disease, which has already killed 4 million people and disrupted the world economy.

Once COVID-19 spreads in any population anywhere in the world, variants of the virus will arise. Any dominant variant will eventually reenter those countries that have vaccinated their population. Thus, people in the imperialist countries, mostly in North America and Europe, whose leaders have monopolized possession of vaccines to the detriment of poorer countries, will still be vulnerable.

U.S. imperialism's political leaders serve the interests of the giant transnational monopolies, protecting and increasing their profits. Because of this, they are ill-equipped to guide the world or even the country out of this COVID crisis.

The drive of the imperialist governments to protect so-called intellectual property rights through enforcing patents is in direct contradiction with the need of humanity for access to lifesaving technology, in this case access to vaccines. The leaders of the imperialist world prioritize the profits of Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, et al, above the need to quickly maximize the production, shipment and delivery of vaccination jabs.

Capitalist states uphold the "intellectual property" of the monopolies, even though government funds financed the development of the vaccines and often government laboratories have developed and tested them. This is to protect the profits of the pharmaceuticals, whose owners are part of the ruling class.

China, on the contrary, whose priority is **not** protecting capitalist profits, has offered to share its technology and aid other countries in producing any of the seven vaccines it believes are effective in countering COVID-19. Its own production has reached 3 billion doses this year and is expected to reach 5 billion next year. It has been vaccinating 20 million people in China a day and expects to have inoculated the entire adult population by the end of 2021, even as it has become the main supplier of vaccines to other countries, especially in Asia and Latin America.

In delivering vaccines and organizing public health measures in the U.S., any inequalities in service — besides causing needless suffering and death among those discriminated against — contradict the attempt to develop general "herd immunity" to wipe out the disease in all its variants. That the corporate media publishes contradictory information about vaccine effectiveness hurts efforts to control the virus.

Equality and solidarity are themselves weapons in the struggle to control, contain and eliminate the disease, and capitalist competition is an enemy of the people and a spreader of the virus.

Biden celebrates while crisis remains unresolved

On July 4 the Biden administration celebrated what it considered its success in combating COVID-19. By that date, two-thirds of the adult population of the U.S. had received at least one dose of the vaccine, only a few points short of Biden's 70% goal. Compared to the anti-scientific approach of the prior administration — which poisoned the attitudes of a large section of the population and contributed to the death of hundreds of thousands of people — the Biden approach seemed intelligent.

It was a low bar for comparisons. The Biden group as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention faced the pressures of the ruling class to reopen economic activity sooner rather than later. What followed was the government's rapid abandonment of precautions meant to slow the spread of the disease, precautions that had at least taken root in parts of the country. There is ruling-class pressure to abandon supplementary unemployment payments, which have allowed some workers to avoid working in dangerous conditions.

The government and CDC advice has led to dropping much of the effort to mandate mask-wearing — simple for most people — and more confining measures, such as restricting large gatherings or mandating social-distancing in indoor events. In parts of the country where vaccination rates are low, new COVID-19 cases and deaths continue.

Making vaccines safely accessible to everyone is necessary. This includes all migrant workers, who must face

FREE TESTING & CARE FOR CORONAVIRUS COVID-19
International Working Women's Day Coalition
Mandatory Paid Sick Leave & Cancellation of Bill Payments For ALL With COVID-19
International Working Women's Day Coalition
U.S. SANCTIONS DEPRIVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF FOOD, WATER & MEDICINE!
SANCTIONSKILL.ORG

International Working Women's Day, New York City, March 8, 2020. WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

no negative consequences based on their immigration status. Also necessary are outreach, education and easy geographical access to get doses — which now exist in quantity within the U.S.

Zigzagging on these questions by the government will give an opening for the Trumpites — who are opportunists and will seize any question that can be used to discredit their Democratic Party opponents.

The more delicate and truly debatable question about resuming in-person schooling has left much confusion and hostility. No children under 12 can be vaccinated yet, and parents and school staff are divided about resuming in-person classes.

The lesson of all these points is that the capitalist organization of society, prioritizing competition among the people and maximizing profits for the monopolies, makes monopoly capitalism incapable of handling and controlling global crises such as that brought about by COVID-19. It is one more reason to fight for a socialist world. ☐

El que no trabaje (por un salario bajo) no comerá

Continúa de la página 12

a trabajar antes de que expiraran las prestaciones. (CBS News, 2 de junio)

Estos políticos están realmente tratando de obligar a la gente a trabajar por salarios bajos. Si $300 dólares combinados con su cheque de desempleo normal — como máximo el 50% de su paga semanal media — suman más de lo que ganaban trabajando 40 horas, eso significa que no ganaban más de 15 dólares por hora antes de la pandemia. Muchos ganaban mucho menos.

Y si trabajaban para una cadena de comida rápida, su jefe ganaba mucho más. El director general de McDonald's, Chris Kempczinski, ganó casi $11 millones de dólares el año pasado. El pobre director general de Wendy's ganó apenas $6,7 millones de dólares. Pero José Cil, director general de RBI — la empresa matriz de Popeye's, Burger King y Tim Horton's — tiene un sueldo de ¡20 millones de dólares!

Esto es calderilla comparado con el jefe de Amazon, Jeff Bezos, un centibillonario (que vale $100.000 millones de dólares) por partida doble.

Ahora estos jefes asquerosamente ricos y sus secuaces políticos tienen un mensaje para los trabajadores: Si no os sometéis a nuestra despiadada explotación y trabajáis por salarios bajos, no comeréis. Ni tendréis asistencia sanitaria. O mantener un techo sobre tu cabeza.

¡Ya basta! Triplicad el salario mínimo. No a los recortes en las prestaciones por desempleo, ¡ni ahora ni en septiembre! ☐

Honduras

Director of Berta Cáceres' assassination found guilty

By Martha Grevatt

Roberto David Castillo Mejía, accused by prosecutors of "masterminding" the assassination of beloved Honduran environmentalist and Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres, was found guilty of homicide July 5 by a three-judge panel.

Cáceres was the leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). At the time of her killing, March 3, 2016, COPINH was resisting the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam project on the Galcarque River, a major source of drinking water and a sacred waterway for the Indigenous Lenca people.

Castillo Mejía was the manager of the DESA corporation and was supervising the dam's construction.

In 2018, seven paid hit men were found guilty of fatally shooting Cáceres and wounding a Mexican supporter of COPINH. A mountain of evidence presented in Castillo Mejía's trial proved that he arranged the assassination and paid off the hit men. Analogous to the conviction of George Floyd's killer Derek Chauvin, the verdict in this trial represented for COPINH "a step toward breaking the impunity pact." (copinh.org)

Since the U.S.-backed coup against democratically elected President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya in 2009, impunity has been the rule not the exception for those who torture and murder popular leaders. Many people involved in assassinations, including Castillo Mejía, received training in the U.S. — often at the despised School of the Americas (now the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation).

The chain of command in Cáceres' murder goes higher than Castillo Mejía. A statement jointly issued by COPINH, and the mother and children of Cáceres states: "We reaffirm that the Berta Cáceres Justice Cause [campaign] in Honduras does not end with this resolution but is firmly aimed at bringing to justice the intellectual authors of this crime: Daniel Atala Midence, José Eduardo Atala, Pedro Atala and Jacobo Atala and other persons and institutions involved."

The Atala Zablah family of Honduran oligarchs owns DESA as well as Banco FICOHSA, the finance capital behind the Agua Zarca project. "It's them or us," DESA board member Pedro Atala Zablah reportedly said in October 2015, referring to COPINH. No member of the family has been charged in Cáceres' killing.

The bank has hired former House Rep. Alan Wheat to lobby against the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act in the U.S. Congress. The Act would suspend funding of Honduran police and military, "until such time as human rights violations by Honduran state security forces cease and their perpetrators are brought to justice."

Cáceres' defense of nature, the Lenca people

This writer had the privilege of meeting Berta Cáceres in November 2013 in Honduras, while representing the International Action Center as a human rights observer during the presidential election—which was stolen by the U.S.-supported right-wing candidate, Juan Orlando Hernández. In the time leading up to the meeting with U.S. solidarity activists, Cáceres had been incognito due to death threats and an arrest warrant against her.

PHOTO: COPINH

Feminist Encampment Viva Berta, set up and maintained during the trial of Roberto David Castillo Mejía, who was found guilty of homicide in the assassination of Berta Cáceres.

The Spanish text of the book, "Las Revoluciones de Berta," can be downloaded at tinyurl.com/p6dpmz6.

Cáceres explained how the Lenca were being evicted from their own ancestral lands to give transnational corporations "concessions" to own rivers and exploit resources including gold, iron, platinum and silver. Their territory has been "militarized" by the coup regime and the U.S. military, which has built bases inside the Lenca region.

Cáceres told us that the Lenca today have "inherited an entire history of rebellion against colonialism" and are now "in a life-and-death struggle."

The leader of COPINH spoke passionately and poetically against capitalism for its "perverse notion of giving nature a dollar amount."

In 2015 Cáceres was the recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize. The struggle begun by her and COPINH continues under the leadership of her daughters Bertha and Laura Zúñiga Cáceres.

Verdict won through struggle

Throughout the three-month trial of Castillo, thousands of Hondurans demonstrated outside demanding justice, while a "Campamento Feminista Viva Berta" kept up an encampment until the judges handed down the verdict.

"We have been sustaining food, the different ways of being and relating, the effort to stay day and night, saying that Berta is multiplied in our lives and that this is also justice for her," the Campamento said in its final statement. Since the 2016 assassination, a popular saying has been "Berta did not die, she multiplied."

The verdict was achieved, the statement added, because of the Honduran Resistance "taking out that trial full of racism, classism and misogyny ... from the Supreme Court of Justice building, to the street, to the square that we have occupied for 90 days today to talk about the movements, the injustice, the struggles, the desire to change this country." (copinh.org)

Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, Berta's youngest daughter and the only family member allowed inside court, stated: "This is a collective victory, and my message to other communities in similar situations is this: The fight is hard, but in the end, as my mom said, that we are going to triumph, and we are going to dismantle the violence against our people." (The Guardian, July 5) ☐

Stop privatizing Puerto Rico!

The U.S.-imposed Fiscal Control Board continues to try to impose all possible neoliberal policies of privatization on the people and island of Puerto Rico. The people have continued to fight back, most recently against LUMA Energy, the private contractor that took over operation of Puerto Rico's electrical grid June 1.

The letter to the U.S. Congress outlines the reasons for demanding an investigation of LUMA. The letter was released with the following statement by Amigos Río Guaynabo, Asociación de Empleados Gerenciales AEE, CAMBIO, Coalición de Organizaciones Anti-incineración, Comité Diálogo Ambiental, El Puente, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), Sierra Club de PR, UTIER [Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego] and other organizations.

We are living in the ravages of poor service and thousands of Puerto Ricans without electricity on a daily basis, because LUMA does not have enough personnel with the necessary experience. In addition, the policies of continuing to depend on fossil fuels are part of the business policy of LUMA and its parent companies Quanta Services and ATCO Group.

We have prepared a letter to the U.S. Congress, requesting an investigation about the allocation of billions of federal funds to this company. We ask all organizations, institutions — and all people who can — to endorse the letter at this link: *tinyurl.com/2bx2bavb*.

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
July 20, 2021

Dear Representative Grijalva:

We urge the House Natural Resources Committee to undertake an urgent investigation into LUMA Energy, the private contractor that took over the operation of Puerto Rico's electrical grid on June 1 and will be responsible for managing more than $14 billion in FEMA funds for the rebuild of the grid.

The first month of LUMA's operations in Puerto Rico have been a disaster. LUMA is a joint venture of Texas-based Quanta Energy Services and Alberta-based ATCO. LUMA did not hire the majority of the previous workforce of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA).

As a result of failing to hire a trained and experienced workforce, LUMA has been unable to properly manage the grid, putting lives and property at risk due to prolonged outages and voltage fluctuations that have caused fires and tens of thousands of dollars in damages. Under the contract, LUMA receives a fixed fee of more than $100 million per year to manage the grid, regardless of its performance.

LUMA has disrespected the Puerto Rico legislature, forcing the legislature to go to court to try to compel LUMA to provide information on how many linemen the company has, where its Puerto Rico call centers are located and other basic information. As you know, LUMA also failed to appear to testify at a June 30 House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing on the AES coal plant in Puerto Rico.

This debacle would not be occurring if not for the influx of billions of dollars in FEMA and HUD CDBG [Community Development Block Grant] funds to Puerto Rico. Under its contract, LUMA Energy will manage and subcontract the federal funds without having to invest any of its own money into the grid.

The allocation of more than $14 billion in federal funding to Puerto Rico's electrical system presents a historic opportunity to transition towards a reliable, decentralized grid based in rooftop solar, as community, environmental and labor organizations in Puerto Rico have long advocated. However, LUMA has shown no interest in moving in this direction, instead focusing its plans on rebuilding a hardened, centralized system like the one that collapsed during Hurricane Maria.

LUMA's lack of transparency and its inability to provide reliable electric service raise several urgent questions, including:

PHOTO: ALEJANDRO GRANADILLO

In San Juan, Puerto Ricans protested the privatization of energy under LUMA Energy, June 1.

- What is the current status and level of training of LUMA's workforce?
- Is LUMA prepared to manage more than $14 billion in FEMA and HUD funds?
- What actions will FEMA and HUD take to ensure that its funds are used to further Biden administration climate policy and to prevent the contracting process for such funds becoming a boon to LUMA's corporate affiliates? What agreements have already been reached between FEMA, HUD, LUMA Energy and/or PREPA?
- Why does the federal Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico continue to support this contract, which has increased costs for the Commonwealth government and does not further the island's renewable energy goals?
- How did this unknown consortium win the contract to operate Puerto Rico's grid against other bidders with greater expertise in managing electrical systems? What role did Quanta Energy Services' federal lobbying play in the award of the contract?

We hope that your committee will undertake an urgent investigation to provide the people of Puerto Rico with answers to these questions. ☐

Intolerancia tras hoja de higo

Continúa de la página 12

Estambul y en el corazón de la propia Roma, las relaciones homosexuales se aceptaban como expresiones válidas de una capacidad dada por Dios para amar y comprometerse con otra persona, un amor que podía celebrarse, honrarse y bendecirse tanto en nombre de, como a través de la Eucaristía en presencia de Jesucristo". (Irish Times, 11 de agosto de 1998)

Antes de la llegada del colonialismo de los colonos, las culturas indígenas reconocían muchos géneros y relaciones de pareja.

En realidad, el tribunal está validando la larga historia de misoginia patriarcal y de opresión contra el colectivo LGBTQ2S+ -enraizada en las relaciones de propiedad privada y que continúa bajo el feudalismo medieval europeo, el colonialismo de los colonos, la esclavitud y el capitalismo-, que tanto la Iglesia como el Estado tienen una fea historia de apoyo. ☐

WORKERS WORLD
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FOTO: SILVIO CARRILLO/COPINH

Berta Cáceres Flores, activista ambiental indígena, 1971-2016.

El que no trabaje (por un salario bajo) no comerá

MUNDO OBRERO *editorial*

En 2017, para justificar los cambios en el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria, (SNAP, siglas en ingles), el representante Jodey Arrington se apoyó en las escrituras — específicamente en 2 Tesalonicenses 3-10: "Si un hombre no trabaja, no comerá". (Washington Post, 31 de marzo de 2017)

El congresista republicano abogaba por obligar a los beneficiarios a trabajar por sus prestaciones — o a enfrentarse a un recorte-.

Algunos eruditos bíblicos argumentaron que esto era una mala interpretación de la intención de San Pablo.

Pero las intenciones de Arrington y otros funcionarios de la derecha no podrían ser más claras. Su apelación no es realmente a los cristianos devotos, sino a los estereotipos racistas de que la gente de color "no quiere trabajar".

Este ataque también afecta a millones de trabajadores blancos; aproximadamente la mitad de los beneficiarios del SNAP son blancos.

Los ataques han resurgido, acompañados de argumentos regurgitados, con los anuncios de 25 gobernadores republicanos de que los trabajadores desempleados de sus estados perderán el impulso de $300 dólares semanales a sus prestaciones regulares. Estos pagos formaban parte del Plan de Rescate Americano de Biden, aprobado por el Congreso a principios de este año.

Previsto para agotarse en septiembre de todos modos, los suplementos se terminarán en junio o julio en todos los estados liderados por los republicanos, excepto en dos. Los trabajadores autónomos — que suelen ser clasificados erróneamente como trabajadores por cuenta propia, pero a los que se les concedió una compensación por desempleo en los recientes proyectos de ley de alivio de la COVID — están perdiendo sus beneficios por completo.

¿Por qué?

"En Arizona, vamos a utilizar el dinero federal para animar a la gente a trabajar... en lugar de pagar a la gente para que no trabaje", dijo el gobernador Doug Ducey, cuyo estado está dando a los trabajadores que regresan una bonificación única. "La economía de Texas está en auge y los empleadores están contratando en comunidades de todo el estado", proclamó el gobernador Greg Abbott. Sus sentimientos fueron secundados por otros gobernadores que optaron por rechazar los fondos federales en lugar de pagar a los trabajadores desempleados prestaciones adicionales. (CBS News, 2 de junio)

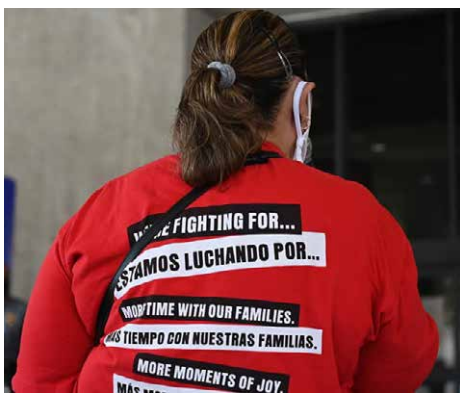

FOTO: NORCAL FIGHT FOR 15

Los trabajadores de comida rapidá exigen acción, Los Angeles, uno de julio.

Los gobernadores demócratas no están precisamente clamando para que las prestaciones se prolonguen más allá de septiembre, lo que significa que en unos meses más, los desempleados de sus estados también tendrán que elegir entre un trabajo mal pagado y unas prestaciones por desempleo aún más bajas.

Recortes de prestaciones basados en un mito

Los hechos no apoyan la postura de que "pagar a la gente para que no trabaje" — es decir, dar a los desempleados el dinero suficiente para sobrevivir — disuade a la gente de buscar empleo. Un estudio realizado en febrero por el Instituto JP Morgan Chase desmintió esa afirmación, al constatar que, incluso después de ver incrementados sus cheques semanales de desempleo en $600 dólares al inicio de la pandemia el año pasado, muchos trabajadores volvieron

Continúa en la página 10

Arizona y gas utilizado por nazis en las ejecuciones

Por Gloria Rubac

En Estados Unidos, donde el apoyo a las ejecuciones patrocinadas por el estado ha ido disminuyendo durante la última década, donde se condena a muerte a menos personas y donde se llevan a cabo menos ejecuciones, parece extremo que los estados utilicen ahora pelotones de fusilamiento o ahorcamientos o electrocuciones o cámaras de gas para llevar a cabo linchamientos legales.

Gracias al excelente trabajo de los activistas europeos, los medicamentos para las inyecciones letales se han vuelto extremadamente difíciles de encontrar. Los fabricantes de medicamentos, muchos de ellos con sede en Europa, ya no suministran medicamentos para inyecciones letales a los sistemas penitenciarios, incluso en Estados Unidos.

Activistas contra la pena de muerte protestan frente a la prisión de Florence, Arizona, donde Joseph Wood fue ejecutado el 23 de julio de 2014.

Métodos de muerte nazis

Esta primavera, el estado de Arizona se preparó para llevar a cabo ejecuciones con el mismo gas que utilizaba el régimen nazi alemán. Arizona gastó miles de dólares en la compra de ingredientes para ejecutar a personas con un gas de cianuro, el Zyklon B, que los nazis utilizaron para asesinar a millones de judíos europeos, gitanos, personas LGBTQ+, comunistas y otros combatientes de la resistencia en campos de concentración entre 1942 y 1945.

La última vez que Arizona utilizó su cámara de gas fue en 1999 para ejecutar a Walter LaGrand, la última persona ejecutada con gas letal en Estados Unidos. "Comenzó a toser violentamente -tres o cuatro fuertes golpes- y emitió un sonido de arcadas antes de caer hacia adelante". LaGrand tardó 18 minutos en morir.

Denuncia de los planes de Arizona

Christoph Heubner, vicepresidente ejecutivo del Comité Internacional de Auschwitz, declaró al New York Times en una entrevista del 2 de junio: "Para los supervivientes de Auschwitz, el mundo se desmoronará por fin si en algún lugar de esta Tierra se vuelve a considerar el uso del Zyklon B en el asesinato de seres humanos. A sus ojos, se trata de un acto vergonzoso e indigno de cualquier democracia y además, insulta a las víctimas del Holocausto".

Martin Weiss, embajador de Austria en Estados Unidos, tuiteó: "La pena de muerte es en sí misma un castigo cruel e inusual. Preparar el uso de Zyklon B para las ejecuciones está fuera de lugar".

Para los abolicionistas de la pena de muerte, todos los métodos de ejecución son horribles, como lo es la propia pena de muerte. Ningún Estado, ningún gobierno, debería dedicarse a matar personas. Los abolicionistas no sólo luchan por acabar con las prisiones, tal y como se conocen hoy en día, sino también por acabar con los linchamientos legales.

Como dice un cántico de llamada y respuesta utilizado en Texas: "¿Ejecuciones? ¡Que se cierren! ¿La pena de muerte? ¡Apágala! ¿Tribunales racistas? ¡Apágalas! ¿Policías mentirosos? ¡Ciérralos! ¿Todo el maldito sistema? Que lo cierren".

Gloria Rubac es una activista por décadas en el Movimiento de Abolición de la Pena de Muerte de Texas.

Intolerancia tras hoja de higo de la religión

Por Martha Grevatt

El fallo del 17 de junio del Tribunal Supremo de los Estados Unidos, en el caso Fulton contra Filadelfia, representa un ataque intolerante a los derechos de las personas LGBTQ2S+.

En Filadelfia, la discriminación por orientación sexual es ilegal; la ciudad tiene prohibido contratar con empresas o agencias que discriminen. En 2018, Filadelfia puso fin a su contrato para colocar a los niños con padres de acogida con Catholic Social Services, (CSS), debido a su negativa declarada a prestar servicios a las parejas del mismo sexo. El contrato no debía renovarse a menos que CSS pusiera fin a su política discriminatoria.

Cuando CSS presentó una demanda -a la que se sumaron tres padres de acogida que apoyaban su postura retrógrada- un tribunal menor falló a favor de Filadelfia, diciendo que sus políticas no violaban la cláusula de "libre ejercicio de la religión" de la Primera Enmienda. La agencia basada en la iglesia argumentó que su creencia basada en la fe de que "el matrimonio es un vínculo sagrado entre un hombre y una mujer" no podía ser utilizada legalmente por Filadelfia para poner fin a su relación con CSS. El proceso de acogida de la ciudad implica normalmente la cooperación con las agencias privadas con las que contrata. (supremecourt.gov)

El fallo de la Corte Suprema -que fue unánime, es decir, los tres jueces "liberales" coincidieron- contradijo al tribunal inferior, afirmando que las leyes de no discriminación de Filadelfia tenían una cláusula que permitía a la ciudad hacer "excepciones". El alto tribunal dictaminó que CSS tenía, por tanto, derecho a una excepción, basándose en el "libre ejercicio" de la Primera Enmienda.

En otras palabras, el lenguaje legal que prohíbe la discriminación se vuelve nulo cuando esa discriminación se lleva a cabo bajo la cobertura de la "libertad religiosa". Esta laguna religiosa se utiliza habitualmente para negar derechos civiles básicos a las comunidades LGBTQ2S+. En este caso, perjudica a los niños que esperan un hogar de acogida.

Aunque el impacto de esta decisión es limitado, ya que se refiere específicamente a la autorización de "excepción" de Filadelfia, abre la puerta a acciones de mayor alcance de la Corte Suprema de Justicia de los EE.UU. que defienden la intolerancia. Tres de los jueces más derechistas -Samuel Alito, Amy Coney-Barrett y Neil Gorsuch- escribieron una opinión minoritaria en la que se quejaban de que el fallo era "un hilo de decisión que deja la libertad religiosa en un estado confuso y vulnerable". (The Hill, 17 de junio)

Falsa defensa religiosa

La historia del cristianismo no respalda la posición de la CSS, dirigida por la diócesis católica. La Iglesia Católica quiere hacer creer al público que a las parejas del mismo sexo se les negó el reconocimiento desde el inicio de la iglesia, basándose en la creencia religiosa del "vínculo sagrado". Este mito fue desmontado por la innovadora obra de John Boswell de 1994, "Same Sex Unions in Pre-modern Europe", (Uniones del Mismo Sexo en Una Europa Pre Moderna).

El libro "demuestra que durante gran parte de los dos últimos milenios, en las iglesias parroquiales y las catedrales de toda la cristiandad, desde Irlanda hasta

Continúa en la página 11